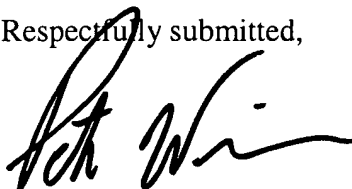


REMARKS

The present application is in condition for examination. The application is amended to make grammatical changes and more clearly describe the invention. No new matter has been entered by this Preliminary Amendment. Should the Examiner have any questions or comment, please telephone undersigned counsel. A "Version With Markings To Show Changes Made" is attached.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Weissman", is written over a horizontal line.

Peter S. Weissman
Registration No. 40,220
Attorney for Applicant

BLANK, ROME, COMISKY & McCAULEY LLP
900 Seventeenth Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
Telephone: (202) 530-7405
Fax (202) 463-6915

In Re: Albert L. Donaldson, Application No. 09/573,848, filed May 19, 2000
Examiner: Not Assigned, Group Art Unit: 2756

VERSIONS WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

In the specification:

Paragraph beginning at page 1, before line 2, has been amended as follows:

This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Serial No. 09/447,590, filed November 23, 1999, now U.S. Patent No. 6,321,267.

Paragraph beginning at page 2, line 8, has been amended as follows:

Spam can also be a serious security problem. For instance, the [recent] Melissa virus and ExploreZip.worm have been spread almost exclusively via email attachments. Such viruses are usually dangerous only if the user opens the attachment that contains the malicious code, but many users open such attachments.

Paragraph beginning at page 4, line 7 has been amended as follows:

The sending host's Message Transfer Agent 1001 sends an email message to the receiving host 1002. At step 1010, the sending MTA opens a TCP connection to the receiving host's reserved SMTP port. This is shown as a dashed line with an italics description to differentiate it from the subsequent protocol messages. This typically involves making calls to the Domain Name System (DNS) to get the IP address of the destination host or the IP address [from] for a Message Exchange (MX) [record] host for the domain. For example, the domain escom.com has a single MX record that lists the IP address 192.135.140.3. Other networks,

particularly large Internet Service Provides (ISPs), might have multiple MX records that define a prioritized list of IP addresses to be used to send email to that domain.

Paragraph beginning at page 20, line 8 has been amended as follows:

Configuration databases include Trusted DB 1093, which is used to identify trusted networks that are permitted to bypass further filtering; Whitelist DB 1094, which contains individual email addresses that are permitted to bypass further filtering; Blacklist DB 1095, which identifies IP addresses of remote hosts that will be blocked immediately after they connect to the proxy server; Relay DB 1096, which contains configuration data for the Active [Dialup] Relay filter, including addresses of untrusted hosts that are known not to be dialup clients; Dialup DB 1097, which identifies untrusted hosts that are known not to be dialup clients; Configuration DB 1098, which includes general data such as the IP address and port for the Mailhost 1105, permissible domain names for RCPT messages, etc; and System Log 1099, as typically provided by the UNIX syslog facility or Windows NT Event Log service. The alternative embodiments may provide for merging some or all databases into a single configuration database, however preferably excluding the Log 1099.

Paragraph beginning at page 25, line 20 has been amended as follows:

Figure 13 provides an overview of the present invention, with more detailed operation shown in Figs. 14-[23] 29. The figure shows the key steps used by the Active Filter Proxy 1401 to validate a single email message from a remote host 1400 and transfer the message to the protected MTA 1402. A separate SMTP connection 1418 is used for actively probing the remote

host in order to perform Active Dialup 1420 detection and Active Relay 1450 detection. An additional connection may be established to a different mailhost for Active User testing. The Active filter Proxy 1401 corresponds to proxy 1104 shown in Fig. 7.

Paragraph beginning at page 26, line 11 has been amended as follows:

With respect to Internet standards, the present invention may be implemented without any changes to SMTP or any other protocol. Rather, this method uses multiple SMTP connections, appropriately [timed] synchronized to permit the proxy server to characterize the remote host 1400. Thus, the SMTP connection 1403 is initiated by the remote host 1400, and involves transactions 1410, 1413, 1480, 1484, 1488, 1493, and 1495. The SMTP connection 1418 is initiated by the Active Filtering proxy 1401, and involves transactions beginning at step 1450. This session is used only to acquire protocol responses from the remote host 1400. It does not actually send an email message from the proxy server 1401 to the remote host 1400. In addition, the proxy server 1401 makes other connections to DNS name servers and, if the connection 1418 fails, may make an SMTP connection to the Mail Exchange (MX) host for the address given in step 1413.

Paragraph beginning at page 28, line 6 has been amended as follows:

[If the results of the Active dialup test are negative (that is, the proxy does not categorize the remote host as a dialup) or the results of the Active Relay test are indeterminate (the proxy is unable to successfully conclude Relay testing on that connection)] If the remote host does not pass the Active Relay test, including addresses of untrusted hosts that are known not to be relays,

then the proxy 1401 conducts Active User testing 1901. Here the proxy identifies a mailhost responsible for processing mail to the supposed sender of the message and queries that mailhost as to whether it will accept mail to that address. These protocol interactions are similar to those used in the Active Relay method but are not shown on Figure 13 since they do not usually involve the remote host 1400. If the configured mailhost for that address will not accept a reply to the MAIL From address, then the sender's address (i.e., the message) is probably forged, so the proxy 1401 sends an error message and immediately closes the connection. Active User testing is more fully discussed in relation to Figure 19.

Paragraph beginning at page 30, line 11 has been amended as follows:

In all cases, the proxy host 1401 is preferably a Mail Exchange (MX) host for the local domain and is configured to listen on the SMTP port (TCP 25) for connections from remote hosts 1400. In the preferred embodiment, the proxy [runs on a Unix system and the Unix inetd (Internet Daemon) program (not shown)] is configured [via the /etc/inetd.conf file] to start a separate instance of the Active Filtering process when it receives the TCP connection to port 25. Thus, the proxy process 1401 handles a single message and exits when it has either rejected the message or transferred the message to the MTA.

Paragraph beginning at page 33, line 1 has been amended as follows:

The use of linear files for the trusted database and the blacklist database might not be optimal for performance in all networks. Accordingly, trusted domain names (e.g., "remote.dom") might preferably be maintained in a [hashed list or dbm file] hashed dbm file.

Blacklisted IP addresses might preferably be maintained in bitmap, a hashed list, dbm file, or even in Content addressable Memory (CAM) for increased performance. [The check for a blacklisted IP address consists of opening the bitmap database, seeking to the appropriate byte, and reading the bit for the specified block (e.g., 192.135.140) of IP addresses.] If the bit is set, then the block of addresses is blacklisted, otherwise it is acceptable.

Paragraph beginning at page 35, line 6 has been amended as follows:

In the preferred embodiment, the whitelist file is a text file that contains addresses (one per line) that are periodically mined from sendmail log entries for outgoing ("to=") messages. These log entries are for mail sent by the local organization to destination addresses on other networks, so adding these destination addresses to the whitelist file will ensure that the proxy will permit incoming email from those persons that local users have sent mail to. However, the whitelist database may be implemented as [a hashed database (e.g., dbm files)] hashed db files, or even could be disabled. If the address matches a whitelist entry, processing continues with step 1470. The differences between the trusted database 1093 and the whitelist database 1094 is that for trusted hosts, mail is permitted from any user on the remote host to any user on the local host. For whitelist entries, mail is permitted only from the named user on the remote host to any user on the local host.--

Paragraph beginning at page 38, line 1 has been amended as follows:

The preferred embodiment uses a flat ASCII filed structure for the dialup database. If the requirement for non-dialup entries grow significantly, other representations (hashed [lists, dbm]

db files, or CAM) may be desirable for performance reasons. If the IP address matches any entry, then the proxy 1401 bypasses any further dialup testing, and proceeds to step 1901. Relay testing is not conducted since the filter has already determined that the reverse connection cannot be established to the remoter host at step 1419. If it does not match any entry in the non-dialup list, then it proceeds with dialup testing in step 1422.

Paragraph beginning at page 50, line 13 has been amended as follows:

At step 1462, the proxy 1401 attempts to find if the IP address of the remote host 1400 matches a non-relay entry in the Relay database 1096 (Fig. 7). This database lists blocks of addresses that the local organization must exchange email with, but which would fail the relay test. There might typically be between about 5-50 entries in this database, with each entry covering a block of addresses. These entries can be pre-defined by a site survey performed by each organization, preferably before installing the Active Filtering proxy server. For simplicity, the preferred embodiment of the Relay Database 1096 (as with other IP addresses listed in steps 1406 and 1413) expresses these addresses as a dotted-quad IP address, a forward slash "/", and a number of bits to be matched. Other embodiments may use other representations (hashed [lists, dbm filed] db files, or CAM) for performance reasons.

Paragraph beginning at page 56, line 1 has been amended as follows:

With respect to Figure 19, the Active Filtering proxy 1401 begins operation at step 1901 subsequent to either Active Dialup or Active Relay testing. In step 1902, the proxy identifies a mailhost 1900 responsible for receiving mail to the MAIL From address 1413. The proxy

searches the Domain Name System (DNS) information for the MAIL From domain for records identifying Mail Exchange (MX) hosts for that domain. MX records include a host name and [priority] preference value, and by convention the lowest [priority] preference value identifies the MX host that should be tried first. In the preferred embodiment, the proxy uses resolver library routines such as the DNS BIND res_init() and res_query() functions to access the MX records, however, other methods may be used to access the name server. If no MX host is found, then the proxy uses the MAIL From address (that is, the host name to the right of the "@" character in the MAIL From address) as the mailhost.

Paragraph beginning at page 56, line 11 has been amended as follows:

The step 1903, the proxy attempts to connect to the mail server identified in step 1902. This follows the same mechanisms described in step 1418, except that the TCP connection is to the identified mailhost 1900 rather than to the remote host 1400. If the connection is successful in step 1904, the proxy waits at step 1906 for the system greeting 1905 from the mailhost. Otherwise, if the connection is unsuccessful, the preferred embodiment of the proxy simply proceeds to step 1470 for message transfer to the MTA. In alternative embodiments, the proxy might successively check for lower-[priority] preference MX hosts if the highest [priority] preference host is not available.--